

 ORDER SHOP

John Douillard's

®

INTRO TO
AYURVEDAAYURVEDIC
LIFESTYLEHEALTH
TOPICSDIET +
DETOXHERBS +
SUPPLEMENTS

PODCAST

EBOOKS

STORE
HEALTH
PRODUCTS

Less is More When it Comes to Working Out

Exercise Drives Hunger

Excess Fuel Packs around the Middle

The Hormonal Hunger Response

Ayurvedic Exercise to Reduce, Not Incur, Stress

The Eye of the Hurricane

Less is More When it Comes to Working Out

There is no doubt that we have not evolved to thrive on a sedentary lifestyle, but new research is showing us that burning fat with exercise is easier said than done.

For example, if you were to jog three miles today, that would knock off only about 300 calories from your caloric energy budget. The average daily caloric intake on a weight-loss diet ranges from about 1500-2000 calories per day depending on many factors including gender, body size, weight, activity, and metabolic rate.

Jogging three miles seems like a lot of work to burn off only 300 calories when, in terms of food, losing 300 calories would be the equivalent of skipping a bowl of soup and a small salad. Most of us may rather skip the soup and salad!

The bottom line is that jogging a few times a week puts a very small dent in the calories that need to be burned if you aim to lose weight. According to Daniel Lieberman, author of *The Story of the Human Body*, there are numerous studies to support this effect, showing that even regular, moderate-to-vigorous exercise only yields modest weight reductions averaging between 2-4 pounds. (1)

Keep reading to learn how exercise can actually be *counterproductive* to losing weight, and how you can lose weight and *still* enjoy the plethora of benefits of regular exercise. As we now know, movement is vital for good health! In This Article: Exercise Drives Hunger Excess Fuel Packs around the Middle The Hormonal Hunger Response Ayurvedic Exercise to Reduce, Not Incur, Stress The Eye of the Hurricane

Exercise Drives Hunger

Exercise has indisputable benefits. In fact, the lack of regular exercise may be the most volatile trigger to compromise our optimal health, well-being and longevity. But what's not often discussed is that exercise *also* triggers a stress-fighting hormone called **cortisol**, which drives sugar into the blood to deliver a life-saving burst of energy for your daily jog.

While exercise temporarily suppresses hunger, shortly thereafter, it triggers a hunger for calorie-rich comfort foods.

This hunger is in part due to a cortisol-induced insulin response. Insulin is the hormone that drives sugar into the muscles to fuel the exercise or, as the body may perceive it, whatever emergency is at hand. In an attempt to refuel after exercise, the cortisol and insulin surges, leaving you hungry.

Excess Fuel Packs around the Middle

Insulin and cortisol both have an affinity for storing any unused fuel or sugar as visceral or belly fat, rather than as subcutaneous fat elsewhere in the body. In fact, when it comes to cortisol and insulin surges, the body is four times more likely to store fat around the belly than anywhere else in the body! (3)

The Hormonal Hunger Response

In addition, heightened stress levels that stimulate cortisol and insulin will inhibit the production of a hormone called *leptin* (the appetite hormone), which tells you when you are full. Stress also stimulates the production of another hormone called *ghrelin* or the "hunger hormone". (2) Both of these hormonal effects stimulate hunger as a result of perceived stress by the body. (2)

In other words, if you were to exercise long or hard to get the body to burn stored fat as fuel, you would have to figure out how to resist the very strong hormonal impulse to eat fat-storing, calorie-rich comfort foods that follows shortly after the workout.

Ayurvedic Exercise to Reduce, Not Incur, Stress

In my first book, *Body, Mind and Sport*, I wrote about an exercise technique designed to reduce cortisol-inducing stress during exercise – a "less is more" approach to working out. While we absolutely want to glean the fitness benefits of exercise, we also want to reduce the amount of stress that is perceived by the body during a workout, and the domino effect of hormonal responses that follow.

As is turns out, how you breathe determines how you respond to stress.

If you saw a bear in the woods you would likely take a quick upper chest gasp through your mouth. This would trigger receptors for stress that predominate in the upper lobes of the lungs, and your body would know to produce the accurate hormonal response needed to get you to safety.

Conversely, when we breathe through our noses, the incoming air is forced through the turbinates in the nose and are driven deeply into the lower lobes of the lungs, where the calming, repairing (parasympathetic, "rest and digest") nerve receptors predominate.

In other words, breathing through our noses lets the body know that we are not in the state of emergency, that it can continue – or drop into – its parasympathetic, calm, collected state.

A preliminary study I cited in *Body, Mind, and Sport*, found that nose breathing during exercise may decrease sympathetic (fight or flight) stress, and may increase parasympathetic stress (rebuilding and calming stress) during your workout. (4)

In other words, breathing through the nose during exercise is a tool that can alter the body's perception of an activity it normally perceives as stressful, to one of calm and repair.



The Eye of the Hurricane

Our study also showed the increased production of coherent alpha waves during nose breathing exercise compared to mouth breathing exercise, indicating that nose breathing may elicit a calm, even meditative effect during sub-maximal exercise. (4)

When I wrote *Body, Mind and Sport*, I was experimenting with reproducing the “runners high” on a regular basis. This is a state in which athletes report having a calm, meditative experience during vigorous and competitive activity. Billie Jean King, who wrote the forward to this book, described it best when she said,

“I would transport myself beyond the turmoil of the court to a place of total peace and calm”.

I call this effect the *eye of the hurricane*. It's the ability to be calm in the midst of dynamic activity. The bigger the eye of the hurricane, the more powerful the winds – the calmer we are, the more effective and powerful we can be.

From the Vedic perspective, exercise is an opportunity to handle competition and stress from a calm, non-stressful place. The goal from this perspective, and the formula for the “runners high,” was *to experience the calm of the hurricane's eye and the action of its winds simultaneously*.

When we act from the eye of the hurricane, there are no limits to the potential and performance of the human body. The only requirement is to first establish the calm (the eye) and then, from that place, perform the necessary action (the winds).

From this perspective, exercise does not have to be a stressful, fat-storing, cortisol-producing, insulin-boosting, appetite stimulating, junk food eating, sedentary-provoking event. Let me teach you how to be an efficient nose-breathing exerciser.

Step One:

Go for a walk and breathe deeply in and out through your nose. Count how many steps you take during the inhale and how many steps you take during the exhale. Let's say you take 4 steps on the inhale and four steps on the exhale – that is a great start. As you continue walking, keep trying to lengthen the breath rate through the nose, getting more steps in per breath. Try to get to 10 steps for the inhale and 10 steps for the exhale. Then make your goal 20 steps on the inhale and 20 steps on the exhale.

Note: During this walk, it is important to listen to your breath and not be distracted by music. We are constantly listening to outside stimuli and this is an opportunity to tune in and learn to listen to and experience when the body goes from a calm meditative experience in exercise (or life) to a stressful one. Noticing the difference, and how it feels in the moment when we shift from one to the other, helps us learn how to create, nurture, and build the eye of the hurricane!

Step Two:

Still walking, add the “Darth Vader” nasal breath during the exhale. This is a breath called *ujjayi* breathing that I want you to add during the exhale only. (Please watch the video associated with this article where I demonstrate this technique). This technique will force incoming air into the lower lobes of the lungs, where we find a higher concentration of oxygenated blood and calming nerve receptors. Breathing into the more oxygen-rich lower lobes of the lungs and activating a calm nervous system response to exercise will ward off the release of stress response hormones.

Step Three:

Continue steps one and two, breathing as deeply in and out through the nose as you possible can and applying the “Darth Vader” breathing technique during the exhale only, for the entire duration of a five minute walk, or longer if you like! 

This will oxygenate all five lobes of the lungs allowing you to extend the length of each breath and hopefully reach your goal to take 20 steps during the inhale and 20 steps during the exhale.

Step Four:

Use nose breathing with the “Darth Vader” (*ujjayi*) exhale during your regular workouts. During the first five minutes of the workout as in step four, establish a deep, long, slow rhythm of the breath through the nose. Maintain that rhythm during the workout. If the nasal breath rate shortens or you have to open the mouth to breathe comfortably during the workout, it's a sign that you are overworking. Slow down the pace and reset the original nose breathing rhythm.

Proper nose breathing allows the body to respond to exercise without the fat storing, hunger provoking response. For most of us, this is a process! It is not easy in the beginning, but usually in about 2-3 weeks of practice you will begin to feel comfortable breathing through the nose and start experiencing the benefits.

Stay tuned for my upcoming blog, “15 Benefits of Nose Breathing Exercise,” where I list the physiological benefits of breathing through the nose versus the mouth!

We Recommend 15 Benefits Of Breathing Through Your Nose During Exercise

References

1. Shaw, K. Exercise for Overweight. Cochrane Database of Systematic Reviews. CD003817
2. Cook, C. Physical Activity and Weight Control. 14: 419.
3. Leiber D. *The Story of the Human Body*. Pantheon. New York 2013. p267-70
4. Douillard, J. 2000 *Body, Mind and Sport*. Three Rivers Press. New York



Thank you for visiting LifeSpa.com, where we publish cutting-edge health information combining Ayurvedic wisdom and modern science. If you are enjoying our free content, please visit our Ayurvedic Shop on your way out and share your favorite articles and videos with your friends and family.

Gratefully,
Dr. John



YOU MIGHT ALSO LIKE



The Best Diaphragmatic Exercises: Breath Training for Better Health 📺



Self-Massage, Self-Love, + Self-Healing with Daily Ayurvedic Abhyanga 📺



Vata-Balancing Oat Milk-Date-Almond Butter-Cardamom Protein Smoothie Recipe



5 Ayurvedic Strategies for Healthy Aging

Leave a Comment

Name *

Email *

Website

☐ Save my name, email, and website in this browser for the next time I comment.

Post Comment



John Douillard's LifeSpa®
PO Box 701
Niwot, Colorado 80544

(866) 227-9843
(303) 516-4848



**We're proud to be
a small business.**

SUPPORT

Contact Us

Ayurvedic Consultations with Dr. John

New Patient Paperwork

Join Our Affiliate Program

Wholesale Partner Program

INSIDE LIFESPA

About LifeSpa

About Dr. John Douillard, DC, CAP

Speaking Engagement Info / Press Kit

Join Our Newsletter

New to Ayurveda?



© Copyright 2023 Dr. John Douillard's LifeSpa



The information on this website is for educational purposes only and is not a substitute for medical advice, diagnosis or treatment. For more information pertaining to your personal needs please see a qualified health practitioner.

